



AN ANALYSIS PROBE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NAGALAND

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ABSTRACT

Typically, the Christian church and the Politics are separate entities and are often seen as paradoxical and debatable in today's world but from the critical norms of perusal both are mutually compatible to each other in the state. Why? The reason for this is that Christian Church has many social responsibilities that intersect with political, socio-economic and psychological issues in the state politics. As illustrated biblically in James 2:26 'Faith without work is dead'. This article centres around four key concerns issues: first, to examine the account of why the church needs to engage with state politics; Second, to investigate whether the justice system of the state is compatible with principles of biblical laws; third, and to foster Christian participation in politics for effective and ethical governance; and fourth, to examine how important politics and Christian church are in the state. The study reveals that the two entities are reciprocal to each other with the common objective to bring 'good life' for the society.

KEYWORDS: Politics, State, Christian, Government, Church, Secularism, Bible

INTRODUCTION

The meaning of Church and Christianity

The word 'church' is a translation of the Greek word 'ekklesia', which is defined as 'an assembly' or 'called-out ones'. The original Greek word for Christian is 'Christianos' which comes from the two Greek words 'Christ and titan'. The word Christ means 'anointed' and 'tian' means 'little'. So the word 'Christian' literally means 'little anointed ones'. In the New Testament of the Bible the term is widely used in (Matthew 16:18, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 1 Timothy 3:15) and so forth. It is an organized congregation body and is called as the devotee of Jesus Christ.

The meaning of politics

The English word 'Politics' originates from three Greek words-'Polis', (City-State), 'Polity' (Government) and 'Politeia' (Constitution), (Johari, 2017). The term Politics was first used by Aristotle as an art of possibility. He conceived the study of Politics as the 'Master Science' as science not only the principles of state governance but ethical norms of conduct and social vision. The ambit of Politics denotes state power, an instrument of conflict-resolution regarding allocation of values, an essence of common good and so forth. Politics is everything that affects our lives through the agency of those who exercise and control state power and the purposes for which they use that control.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design implemented in conducting this study is outlined in this section. As it is not practically feasible to directly observe the entire population, a sample for the study was drawn using convenience sampling and cluster sampling. Out of 16 Administrative Districts of Nagaland, (2022) for the study, nine districts were selected. The secondary data sources were collected from online articles, journals and books. The primary data are personal interviews and Google forms questionnaires. The study is qualitative research in nature based on subjective data.

RESULT ANALYSIS

The study indicates that all the respondents are Christians. The political awareness levels are divided into three categories; 23.5% falling at the highest end, 76.5% fall under moderate level followed by low level political knowledge score 0%. The findings acquired that 94.1% of the Christian need the authority of the state and 94.1% responded that politics is significant for them. The study further analyze that 76.5% of the Christian pray for their political leader.

RELATION OF CHURCH WITH POLITICS

Some laymen consider politics to be 'dirty politics' and advised the Christian to stay away from politics. So the question is – Is it right for the Christians to involve in politics? Absolutely yes, according to the Bible, which says in 1 Corinthians 10:31, 'whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God'. Christian entailed in politics cannot profane them, but consequently there will be a substantial impact on the state but provided that if only a man acquired the traits of scrupulous, rectitude, just, superlative, virtuous, and honest, godliness, benevolent and so forth in their socio-political life.

St. Paul urges in the 1 Timothy 2:2 'prayers be offered for all in authority that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity', but however it is futile to pray for the right leader or expect miracles for good governance in the state without actually participating in politics ourselves. Whether politics is con-

sidered clean politics or unclean politics is determined by the caliber of incorruptible individuals who get involved in it.

Christian cannot say politics is dispensable for them; for we need it as much as we need food to survive. As Pericles said, just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you. Politics as an activity is relevant considering that political decisions shape our lives for the greater good for man.

WAS JESUS A POLITICAL BEING?

Some Priests, Theologians and Christians hasten to assure that Jesus was non-political. If by stating that they mean that he did not have party politics or power politics in his mind, they are right. But if they understand political in a general sense of participation in community life, then they are wrong. The 'Sermon on the Mount' is political in nature because it refers to the way in which we should live together as fraternity.

Aristotle described man by nature a 'political animal'. Living in a state is natural: he who lived outside the state or who did not need a state must be either a beast or god (Aristotle). Human sociability is the highest expression of politics. The political state exists for the sake of good life to all humanity.

'I could not live for a single second without religion. My politics are derived from my religion. I go further and say that every activity of a man of religion must be derived from his religion, because religion means being bound to God, that is to say, God rules your every breath' (Gandhi).

St. Thomas Aquinas argued that politics' is not only compatible with human spirituality, but that it is conducive to it. Being a good citizen becomes part of being a good Christian. With reason, politics became an important activity.

BIBLICAL LAW AND INDIAN PENAL CODE

Law is indispensable for all orderliness in the universe and society. The word 'Law' has been derived from the old Teutonic root 'Lag', which means to lay, to place, to set something in an even manner (Johari, 2004).

Law is the product of prescribed procedure indicates regulation of man's behavior. The state "exists for law: it exists in and through law: we may even see that it exists as a law, of by law we mean not only a sum of legal rules which are actually valid and regularly enforced. The essence of the state is a living body of effective rules; and in that sense, the state is law" (Barker, 1951).

Law exists for the individual safety by ensuring the rights against any heinous crime. In the Bible, God is extolled as the lawgiver and the judge of all living beings. The biblical laws emphasize on justice alone. The Old Testament Laws are found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This includes the Ten Commandments. It is often referred to in Scripture as the "Law of Moses," the "tablets of the covenant," or simply "the law". Some modern civil laws of India are very much compatible with Christian biblical laws.

Indian Penal Code was introduced in 1860 into India by Thomas Babington Macaulay who had drafted the code during his time in Bengal in 1830s. It is subdivided into Chapter 23 and Section 511. It is the Official Criminal Code of India.

It defines all criminal offences liable to punishment. The provisions of this code are applied to any offence committed by any citizen of India in any place without and beyond India. All kinds of evil such as; theft, murderer, rape, kidnapping or abduction, sorcery, bestiality, dishonest, bribery, defamation etc. are laid down in the Indian Penal Code.

Here are some of the Biblical Laws simpatico with Indian Penal Code;

- i. IPC Chapter XVI, Section 302 deals with Punishment for murderer with lifetime imprisonment or death penalty. And "whoever takes the life of any human being shall be put to death" (Book of Leviticus 24:17)
- ii. IPC, Section 375 deals with sexual offence case and it is also seen in the Bible (Book of Deuteronomy 22:25-26)
- iii. IPC Chapter XVII, Sections 378-382 deals with theft offences and "you shall not steal" (Book of Exodus 20:15)
- iv. IPC, Chapter XVI, Sections 364A, 365, 368 and (Book of Exodus 21:16) both deals with kidnappers
- v. Both IPC, Chapter XVI, Section 377 and (Book of Leviticus 18:23) both deal with bestiality offenses
- vi. IPC, Chapter X, Sections 383-389 prohibit extortion while the gospel of Luke 3:14 advises against practicing extortion
- vii. IPC, Chapter XIII, Sections 264-267 deal with offences related to weights and measures, and the Book of Proverbs 11:1 states that 'false scales are an abomination to the Lord'
- viii. IPC, Chapter XXI, Section 499 and Gospel of James 4:11 and the Book of Isaiah 29:21, deals with issues of defamation
- ix. IPC 171B deals with bribery cases, and Book of Exodus 23:8 advises 'never take a bribe, for a bribe blinds even the most clear sighted and twists the words even of the just'
- x. IPC, Chapter XI, Section 194 deals with fabricating false evidence while the Book of Deuteronomy 5:20 prohibits bearing dishonest witness against one's neighbor"

Romans 2:12, 'all who sin under the law will be judged by the law'. God is a God of justice. The law is God's perfect standard of obedience as described in the commands, statutes, and ordinances given to those who would worship and serve Him. Any government laws that existed are not a cause of fear to good conduct but to eschew evil conduct. What is lawfully wrong can be spiritually wrong and what is spiritually wrong can be lawfully wrong. The Bible urges the people to adhere to the magisterial authority as in Romans 13:1 says, 'let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities'.

However, with biblical law it does not mean there is no sin or with government law it does not mean there is no crime and violence. But one cannot imagine a State with lawlessness, for without law, the society or the state would be in turmoil and convulsed.

GOVERNMENT WELFAREISM

Through the writer's observation, there are many parochial orthodox Christians who view politics as an external realm not within their responsibility. In fact God created everything and is considered as good. Psalm 24:1 "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein". As Christians, one cannot say 'I don't need material security', however primarily materialism is not the end goal because the focal point for the Christianity is to focus on Heavenly Kingdom, but one must not neglect the role of service of this world.

St. Thomas Aquinas viewed that people's natural and spiritual activities, while distinct, are yet joined in some higher unity. The natural and the supernatural are in some way united within humankind itself (Gilby, 1958).

From the optimistic point of view, the primary objective of the government is to promote good life. Today, almost all government schemes in India are launched to address the social and economic welfare of vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens. In Jeremiah 29:7 says "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare, you will find your welfare". The government schemes play a crucial role in solving many socio-economic problems that beleaguered the Indians today. However, is it wrong for the Christians to serve as personnel allocators in matters of the government's material resources? And is it wrong for Christians to claim these benefits if they wholly abstain from the material entities? Absolutely the answer is no.

'A starving man cannot shout halleluyah' (African Initiated Christianity and the Decolonization of Development by Olufunke Adebayo).

Almost all forms of government; be it socialism, democracy, monarchy are all focused on the welfare services for the people. The Government is explicitly the greatest contributor towards helping the poor, more so than any other religious body today. Let us reflect how governments are accountable to the public services call to mind Jesus also did have a lot to say about some of the most prominent political issues of today such as hunger, destitute, immigration, refugees, sickness and treatment of prisoners as slightly referred in Matthew 25:35-40.

Today, the Indian Government took initiatives of various welfare programs for hunger destitute like National Nutrition Mission, National Food Security Mis-

sion and Zero Hunger program etc. And there are also various schemes sanctioning by the Government of India for poverty alleviation by providing financial assistance to the destitute orphanages and widowers. We see in the letter of James 1:27 where it says, 'Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their affliction'. There are also various health care insurance schemes for the low-income individuals in India like Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY which is now considered the largest health assurance scheme in the world.

Indian Financial year 2022-2023 has also presented the second tranche of aid of USD 2.5 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (The New Indian Express). The policy formulators of government may or may not be Christians, but they uphold the values of Christianity by engaging in welfares for humanity.

SECULARISM AND CHRISTIANITY

"Western dictionaries define secularism as absence of religion but Indian secularism does not mean irreligiousness. It means profusion of religions" (Tharoor, 2007).

India is a land of religions. Under the Indian Constitution, the state has distanced itself from religion. In 1976, the word "Secular" was added to the preamble of the Indian Constitution to emphasize that there is no particular religion in the state. But the Indian Constitution itself gives protection to different religions and religious groups by including religious rights as fundamental rights. Under the Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health. Article 26 gives to every religious denomination a fundamental right to manage its own affairs in matters of religion. This cannot be abrogated in any way. Article 29 gives absolute and unqualified right to minorities to conserve their distinct language, script, and culture. Article 30 gives the fundamental right to all minorities, whether based on religion or language, to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice, but the religious denomination's right to manage its own affairs is restricted to "matters of religion" which are "subject to public order, morality and health."

The controversy with regard to the right to propagation of religion has always existed and is particularly live issue in our country now. Does the freedom to propagate one's religion impinge upon the freedom of another to practice his?

According to the source of cruxnow.com, Supreme Court of India order government to tackle 'forced conversions', several states have already passed anti-conversion laws, which impose fines and jail terms for anyone convicted to a "forced conversion". Many Hindus nationalists accused the Christians of targeting marginalized low caste and tribal Hindus to convert through illicit means, such as offering them food or money. But the Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore said that the Catholic Church is completely opposed to illicit means of proselytizing and that it solely based on Article 25 of the Indian Constitution.

Secularism in India provides negative liberty (freedom from) based on religion; however, Christianity depends on achieving one's essence, which is based on positive liberty (freedom to). It is also clearly written in the Bible (Matthew 10:14), "and whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet". Jesus also never used coercive conversions of the people of his time.

Religion has to do with sensitivity, and its conflicts are hard to resolve because they are not based on 'who gets what' but are based on 'I don't like you'. All religious principles are good if only they do not persecute other religions, as is the case in the context of India's multi-religious state.

CONCLUSION

Introspectively, there is certainly an urgent need for the Church in the face of rampant malfeasance in the State of Nagaland. The Church is, verily, the chief cornerstone of alteration in an existing malfeasance of the political state. What goes on in the state of politics affects all areas of men's lives, including moral religious life. Literally, I will not specify "Naga Political Leaders" alone, but generally; we need a just man who fears the Lord to strive for social and political justice in the state because a just man's voice can be the only sanity that will be respected by society. Politically, what can make a person good in society? Is it not the church that should indoctrinate them? And who doesn't need a veracious man in a political state?

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